

— Big as Life —



June 15th - July 29th, 2012

Lyme Art Association

CURATOR'S STATEMENT

Big as Life is a catchy title, but a work of art had better have more than mass in its favor. The artist Lionel Feininger was correct when he wrote: "Monumentality is not attained by making things larger....On the size of a postage stamp one can represent something gigantic, while yards of canvas may be used in a smallish way and therefore wasted." Yet nobody would have paid much attention to Olympia if Manet had painted her on an 8" by 12" canvas, nor to David if Michelangelo had carved him in miniature. Their size mattered, all the more so because they were beautifully executed, and both works offered significant notions of the figure, one coarse, the other heroic. They retain the power to unsettle and inspire, proof that the figure still matters, in a big way.

I was introduced to the large scale format in my first figure drawing class, when I was 17. In retrospect there were a few reasons that I found the practice of drawing life-size energizing. There was gratification in drawing what was before me, on a matching scale. The marvelous rhythms and mechanisms of human anatomy could be transposed to paper without diminution. Drawing became more obviously a significant endeavor, which is easily forgotten when it's done furtively in a small sketchbook. Moreover, it was physically freeing to work standing up, drawing with one's whole body. Suddenly the perceptive and analytical components were joined with a gestural process that was invigorating. The scale encouraged a greater appreciation for the human presence.

If Feininger was right that size doesn't invariably confer significance, the corollary is that working big doesn't require hyperbole. A large-scale work may express an intimate thought. I suspect that's a rather modern concept, since large-scale figures were usually painted and sculpted to satisfy public or private commissions, and were expected to glorify their subjects. A large work can be a study of an anonymous figure, which alters the traditional notion that its significance derives from the worldly prominence of the subject.

It's the intent of this exhibition to display works that focus on the figure, and to reveal what's already obvious: the human subject takes on unique meaning for each artist. Further, that meaning is fluid. Even an artist whose handiwork is quickly recognizable changes, sometimes imperceptibly, from one work to the next, often in response to transient perceptions. The curatorial dilemma is to sort through an artist's work and choose a momentary impression that best represents both the artist's and the exhibition's intent. This exhibition features a sampling of gifted artists operating under the general heading of traditional figurative art, yet each one uses his or her skills to seek very different resolutions, at the service of their own perceptions.

Consider this a collection of spirits I find sympathetic. My presumption is that many of the works were done from life—it's how I work, choosing to respond to a tangible and transitory rather than virtual and static reference. However, I haven't instituted a litmus test on the matter. The artists included here draw, paint, and sculpt the figure exceedingly well, and do so with a profound interest in and respect for the subject. This exhibition

constitutes a gathering of work by artists I've long known and admired.

The works herein celebrate physical beauty in a variety of forms, explore cultural and emotional complexities, assay the aging process, find the inherent rhythms of the nude and draped body, and observe the formal pleasures of color, tone, atmosphere, and abstract arrangement. All the works share an excellence of craftsmanship, and an honest and personal interpretation of the human figure, seen big as life.

Jerry Weiss
Exhibition Curator
June, 2012

Exhibition Catalog for **Big as Life**

1. Deane G. Keller *Figure Study*

Charcoal 33.5 x 46 Private Collection

2. Nomi Silverman *Veil Study*

Charcoal 24 x 36" \$800

3. Deane G. Keller *Figure Study Damascus*

Charcoal 44.5 x 30.5" Private Collection

4. Mary Beth McKenzie *Butterfly Chair (Mery)*

Oil on canvas 64 x 48" \$25,000

5. Jerry Weiss *Nude with Diamonds*

Oil on canvas 48 x 36" \$17,500

6. Robin Smith *Yesinia*

Oil on canvas 36 x 36" \$6,000

7. Tom Root *Zachary*

Oil on canvas 50 x 30" \$8,000

8. Tom Loepp *Kate and Charlie*

Oil on canvas 50 x 42" \$80,000

9. Hollis Dunlap *Thinking About Yesterday*

Oil on canvas 50 x 40" \$12,000

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Exhibition Catalog for **Big as Life** *(continued)*

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| 10. Robin Smith | <i>Karina</i> | |
| Oil on canvas | 48 x 30" | \$8,000 |
| 11. Dan Gheno | <i>Oil Fire</i> | |
| Oil on canvas | 48 x 30" | \$9,000 |
| 12. Dan Gheno | <i>Elegy</i> | |
| Oil on canvas | 72 x 46" | \$11,000 |
| 13. Jerry Weiss | <i>Standing Nude, from Behind</i> | |
| Pastel on brown paper | 65.75 x 28.75" | \$7,500 |
| 14. Nomi Silverman | <i>Head in Hand</i> | |
| Mixed media drawing | 60 x 36" | \$3,000 |
| 15. Harvey Dinnerstein | <i>Old Man Planting a Tree</i> | |
| Oil on canvas | 96 x 50" | \$58,000 |
| 16. Brian Craig-Wankiiri | <i>Talos (self portrait)</i> | |
| Forton | 72 x 20 x 10" | \$19,500 |
| 17. Don Gale | <i>Three Brained Man</i> | |
| Bronze | 80 x 59 x 47" | \$120,000 |

About the Lyme Art Association

The Lyme Art Association is the oldest art association in the country. Founded in 1914 by the Lyme Impressionists (Childe Hassam, Carleton Wiggins, William Chadwick, and friends), the Association raised money to construct a neo-classical art gallery on Lyme Street in Old Lyme, next door to Miss Florence Griswold's boarding house for artists. The gallery opened in 1921, and was designed by famed institutional and residential architect Charles A. Platt.

The LAA continues the tradition of representational fine art exhibitions by member artists today, with seven juried shows per year. We are open year-round, and are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with over 1,200 members.



Lyme Art Association . 90 Lyme Street, Old Lyme, CT
860. 434.7802 www.LymeArtAssociation.org

The Lyme Art Association thanks our
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SKY Investment Group
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INVESTMENT GROUP

When people come together to
experience art, it brings us closer
and strengthens our community.

Thank you for keeping the tradition
of the Lyme Impressionists alive

Robert Bingham, CFA

John P. Wright, MBA

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